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UNCLAS ABUJA 002283

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

FAS/USDA for Roxana Henderson

E.O. 12598: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [TBIO](#) [NI](#) [ATRD](#) [ECOWAS](#)

SUBJECT: Phytosanitary Program Assessment Trip

REF: State 205212

1. (U) Reftel requested post to meet with ECOWAS Secretariat and judge its interest and ability to host a program to develop phytosanitary capacity. We have not met with the ECOWAS Secretariat by hope to do so by November 23 and will report on the results.

2. (SBU) As an interim response, post provides this assessment from ACCRA-based WARP USAID staff working with ECOWAS and Abuja staff who work with ECOWAS on other issues. They expect that ECOWAS would be interested in participating in such a program. They judged ECOWAS overall institutional capacity for such a program as being very low. In general, the progress made on a project depends on the individual tasked with managing it. Some are good, others are weak, and the choice of or a change in personnel can make or break a program. ECOWAS is faced with some immediate challenges, because two of four senior staff members, plus at least one other employee were killed in the recent Bellview plane crash in Nigeria.

3. (SBU) WATH/Accra is working on an SPS harmonization project with ECOWAS, but is facing problems with communications and follow-through. The current SPS staff is mainly Francophone with relatively weak English. Overall, they believe that ECOWAS capacity would need considerable reinforcement and support to host a significant program.

FUREY